

Message Text

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ACTION NEA-10

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 ISO-00 HA-05 PM-05 H-01 INR-10
L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 SP-02 SS-15 ICA-11
OPR-02 /083 W
-----061592 270808Z /10

R 261036Z JUL 78
FM AMEMBASSY TEHRAN
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 9530
DIA WASHDC
CIA WASHDC
INFO USINT BAGHDAD
AMEMBASSY ISLAMABAD
AMEMBASSY KABUL
AMEMBASSY LONDON

C O N F I D E N T I A L TEHRAN 7069

E.O. 11652:GDS
TAGS: PINS, PORS, SHUM, IR
SUBJ: DEMONSTRATIONS AND VIOLENCE IN IRAN'S PROVINCES

REF: A. TEHRAN 6890, B. TEHRAN 7022

SUMMARY: CELEBRATIONS SURROUNDING 12TH IMAM'S BIRTHDAY JULY 21 INCLUDED DEMONSTRATIONS IN MOST CITIES AND VIOLENCE AT A FEW POINTS. MOST OF VIOLENCE RELATED TO EFFORTS OF PRO KHOMEINI RELIGIOUS FACTION TO TURN NORMALLY JOYOUS CELEBRATIONS INTO MOURNING MEETINGS. MASHAD WAS SCENE OF LARGEST OUTBREAK WITH SOME DEATHS. TROOPS STILL PATROLLING CITY AS OF MORNING JULY 26. DETAILED STORY OF MASHAD EVENTS CONFUSED AND FIRST PRESS MENTION WAS IN JULY 26 PAPERS. JAHROM (FARS PROVINCE) HAD DEMONSTRATION WHICH ESCALATED TO VIOLENCE IN WHICH FOUR GENDARMES WERE REPORTED KILLED. ISFAHAN HAD QUIET PRAYER MEETINGS, SOME WITH ANTI-GOVERNMENT SPEAKERS. IN SHIRAZ, DISTURBANCE AT SHAH CHERAGH MOSQUE LATE EVENING JULY 20, INVOLVED INJURIES AND MAY HAVE RESULTED IN A DEATH ACCORDING
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TO ONE UNCONFIRMED REPORT. TABRIZ WAS PEACEFUL. END
SUMMARY.

1. EVENTS SURROUNDING CELEBRATION OF 12TH IMAM'S BIRTHDAY LEAD TO SUBSTANTIAL VIOLENCE IN MASHAD AND JAHROM, PLUS MORE TROUBLE IN A FEW LOCATIONS. VIOLENCE WAS CAUSED BY PRO KHOMEINI RELIGIOUS FACTIONS AND SOME OF THEIR ALLIES AMONG OPPOSITION

POLITICIANS WHO TRIED TO TURN NORMALLY HAPPY EVENT INTO POLITICALLY SIGNIFICANT MOURNING AFFAIRS FOR THOSE KILLED OR WOUNDED IN VARIOUS INCIDENTS SINCE JANUARY 19 RIOTS. (REFTELS).

2. MASHAD STORY CONFUSED. DEMONSTRATION APPARENTLY BEGAN AROUND SHRINE ON JULY 21 BUT DID NOT TURN VILENT UNTIL MORNING JULY 22 WHEN MOB BEGAN THROWING STONES. AS A RESULT OF THIS, ONE DEMONSTRATOR AND ONE POLICEMAN WERE SEEN KILLED. AS DEMONSTRATION TURNED INTO A RIOT, TROOPS WERE CALLED IN, INCLUDING EVENTUALLY ARMORED UNIT. THIS MUCH IS CONFIRMED BY RELIABLE EUROPEAN EYEWITNESS. ACCORDING TO STORIES FROM DISSIDENT SOURCES. IN COURSE OF DAY JULY 22, NINE POLICEMEN AND 15 DEMONSTRATORS IDENTIFIED AS THEOLOGICAL STUDENTS WERE KILLED AND 30 OR 40 MORE INJURED. ONE JOURNALIST HERE HAS HEARD POLITICAL STATEMENT ISSUED BY FIVE OR SIX SENIOR AYATOLLAHS IN MASHAO CALLING FOR MOURNING PERIOD FOR THOS KILLED, STATEMENT SPEAKS OF ATTACK BY POLICE ON THEOLOGICAL SCHOOL, AND MENTIONS GATHERING OF PEOPLE IN SHRINE. EYEWITNESS REPORT INDICATES THERE WERE SEVERAL THOUSAND PEOPLE IN SHRINE COMPOUND AS OF LATE JULY 24, WITH MORE COMING. ENGLISH AND PERSIAN PRESS MORNING JULY 26 REPORTED ONE POLICEMAN KILLED, 33 CIVILIANS WOUNDED JULY 22 AS RESULT OF FUNERAL PROCESSION FOR PROMINENT AYATOLLAH KAFI, WHO WAS FROM MASHAD AND DIED IN AN AUTO ACCIDENT TWO DAYS
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PREVIOUSLY. STORY AS RELEASED BY OFFICAL PARA NEW AGENCY, REPORTED SEVEN POLICEMEN HAD BEEN WOUNDED ALONG WITH 26 DEMONSTRATORS.

3. PRESS STORIES SOMEWHAT UNUSUAL IN REFERENCE TO KAFI BURIAL, WHICH WAS NOT CITED EITHER BY EYEWITNESS SOURCES NOR BY OTHERS, INCLUDING STATEMEMENT OF PROMINENT AYATOLLAHS. (COMMENT: UNDOUBTEDLY SOME PEOPLE WERE KILLED, BUT NEITHER OFFICAL PRESS VERSION NOR MORE ABSURD DISSIDENT ESTIMATES OF UP TO 200 KILLED SQUARE WITH EYEWITNESS VERSION OF SUBSTANTIAL PORTION OF EVENTS. SIGNIFICANTLY, THIS IS FIRST TIME IN A LONG WHILE THAT MASHAD HAS BEEN IN FORE-FRONT OF VIOLENCE ON MAJOR HOLIDAY, ESPECIALLY WITH RESPECT TO "NATIONAL" POLITICO-RELIGIOUS ISSUE. SOURCE WHO HAS SERVED AS POLITICAL BROKER BETWEEN COURT AND RELIGIOUS LEADERSHIP THINKS GOI WILL HAVE SOME PROBLEMS CALMING MASHAD DOWN AND PREVENTING RELIGIOUS LEADERS THERE FROM BEING DRAWN INTO NATIONAL POLITICAL ORBIT.

4. INFO ON JAHROM EVENTS MUCH MORE FRAGMENTARY. SOURCE CLOSE TO, BUT NOT OF, GOI SAYS FOUR GENDARMES WERE KILLED AFTER DEMONSTRATION BY PRO KHOMEINI GROUP GOT VIOLENT.

OTHER SOURCES SAY THERE WAS SOME LOSS OF LIFE, INCLUDING CIVILIANS, BUT NO NUMBERS ARE GIVEN. CONSULATE SHIRAZ NOTES JAHROM HAS BEEN CENTER OF RELIGIOUS DISTURBANCES FOR SOME TIME.

5. IN ISFAHAN, THERE WERE NO DEMONSTRATIONS OVER WEEKEND, BUT ON JULY 21, THERE WERE AT LEAST SEVEN LARGE PRAYER MEETINGS IN MOSQUES AND IN LARGE PRIVATE HOMES. THREE OF THESE MEETINGS STUCK TO PRAYER; FOUR OTHERS HAD ANTI-GOVERNMENT SPEAKERS WHO HARSHLY CRITICIZED THE GOVERNMENT AND TOOK A PRO-KHOMEINI LINE, BUT DID NOT CALL FOR ANY ACTION. POLICE GUARDS WERE STATIONED AROUND THE MOSQUE WHERE MULLAH TAHERI (JUST RETURNED FROM INTERNAL EXILE--REF A) SPOKE.
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6. SHIRAZ HAD ONLY ONE MAJOR DUSTUP OVER WEEKEND, DEMONSTRATION AT SHAH CHERAGH MOSQUE LATE EVENING JULY 20 AT WHICH SOME VIOLENCE REPORTEDLY ERUPTED. NUMBER OF PEOPLE INJURED, AND ONE STORY HAS ONE PERSON DEAD, BUT THIS IS NOT CONFIRMED BY OTHERS.

7. WEEKEND PASSED QUIETLY IN TABRIZ WITH LARGE POSTER-SIZE PICTURES OF AYATOLLAH SHARIATMADARI (A TABRIZI BY BIRTH) BLOSSOMING IN VIRTUALLY ALL OF CITY'S SHOPS. CONSULATE REPORTS TABRIZ BAZAAR CLOSED ON JULY 23 IN MORNING FOR "MARTYRS" KILLED AT MASHAD.
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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01 jan 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: PUBLIC DEMONSTRATIONS, CIVIL DISORDERS
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 26 jul 1978
Decaption Date: 01 jan 1960
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 20 Mar 2014
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1978TEHRAN07069
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: GS
Errors: N/A
Expiration:
Film Number: D780307-1140
Format: TEL
From: TEHRAN
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1978/newtext/t19780717/aaaaanzy.tel
Line Count: 149
Litigation Code IDs:
Litigation Codes:
Litigation History:
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Message ID: e7e7576c-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Office: ACTION NEA
Original Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 3
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: 78 TEHRAN 6890, 78 TEHRAN 7022
Retention: 0
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 09 mar 2005
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review Media Identifier:
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
SAS ID: 1875064
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: DEMONSTRATIONS AND VIOLENCE IN IRAN'S PROVINCES
TAGS: PINS, PORS, SHUM, IR
To: STATE DIA
Type: TE
vdkgvwkey: odb://SAS/SAS.dbo.SAS_Docs/e7e7576c-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Review Markings:
Sheryl P. Walter
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
20 Mar 2014
Markings: Sheryl P. Walter Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 20 Mar 2014